

I. Introduction



The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is the lead agency for development of *Mississippi's Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources and Forest Resource Strategy*. This document was prepared in response to the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill) that requires each state complete a Statewide Forest Resource Assessment (Assessment) and a long-term Statewide Forest Resource Strategy (Strategy) by June 2010 in order to receive funds under the amended Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA). The Assessment provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends in the state and delineates priority rural and urban forest landscape areas. The Strategy provides long-term plans for investing state, federal, and other resources to effectively stimulate or leverage desired action and engage multiple partners.

The new CFAA refers to the process of “redesigning” how federal funding is provided to state forestry agencies carrying out particular forestry programs on privately owned forestland. The MFC uses these funds, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service’s (USFS) State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs, to support a number of local forestry programs, including technical forestry assistance to rural and urban landowners, enhancing wildfire protection efforts, and supporting forest health programs that address insects, diseases and non-native invasive species that are affecting the health and productivity of Mississippi’s forestland.

The purpose of a “redesigned” S&PF is to shape and influence forestland use on a scale and in a way that optimizes *public benefits* from trees and forests for both current and future generations. In 2008, the USFS began implementing the Redesign effort in response to the combined pressures on the nation’s forests and a decrease in resource funds as well as the need for better partnerships on projects and better program integration. State assessments and resource strategies are integral to S&PF Redesign and required as an amendment to the CFAA, as enacted in the 2008 Farm Bill.

There are three components to the assessment, strategy and planning process required by the Redesign approach.

1. Assessment of Forest Resources

The state forest resource assessment should provide a comprehensive analysis of the forest-related conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities within the state.

Assessments must include:

- *An analysis of present and future forest conditions, trends, and threats on all ownerships in the state using publicly available information.*
- *Forest related threats, benefits, and services consistent with the S&PF Redesign national themes.*
- *Priority rural and urban forest landscape areas to be addressed by the state resource strategy. States can also identify linkages between terrestrial and aquatic habitat, as appropriate.*
- *Multi-state areas that are a regional priority.*
- *Existing statewide plans including state Wildlife Strategies, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and address existing S&PF program planning requirements.*

Part I of this document is a comprehensive assessment of Mississippi's forest resources.

2. Forest Resource Strategy

The strategy will provide a long-term, comprehensive, coordinated strategy for investing state, federal, and leveraged partner resources to address the management and landscape priorities identified in the assessment. The resource strategy should incorporate existing statewide forest and resource management plans and provide the basis for future program, agency, and partner coordination.

The strategy must include:

- *An outline of long-term strategies for addressing priority landscapes identified in the assessment and the national themes and associated management objectives:*

National Themes and Objectives: (Ed note: put in outbox to side)

1. Conserve Working Forest Landscapes

- 1.1. Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes
- 1.2. Actively and sustainably manage forests

2. Protect Forests from Harm

- 2.1. Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts
- 2.2. Identify, manage, and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health

3. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

- 3.1. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity
- 3.2. Improve air quality and conserve energy
- 3.3. Assist communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risks

- 3.4. Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests
- 3.5. Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat
- 3.6. Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities
- 3.7. Manage and restore trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change

- *Description of how the state proposes to invest federal funding, along with other resources, to address state, regional, and national forest management priorities.*
- *A long-term timeline for project and program implementation.*
- *Identification of partner and stakeholder involvement.*
- *Strategies for monitoring outcomes within priority forest landscape areas and how action will be revised when needed.*
- *Description of how the state's proposed activities will accomplish national S&PF program objectives and respond to specified performance measures and indicators.*
- *How S&PF programs will be used to address priority landscape and management objectives.*
- *Existing statewide plans including wildlife action plans, community wildfire protection plans and address existing S&PF program planning requirements.*

Part II of this document is the forest resource strategy for Mississippi.

3. Annual Report on Use of Funds

Each year, MFC must submit an annual report based on the new Forest Resource Strategy that describes how Mississippi used all of the S&PF program funds throughout the fiscal year. The report will also describe specific actions taken throughout the year to address the state assessment and resource strategy and will include a comprehensive budget with contributions from all federal, state, and non-governmental partners.

This document includes both the statewide assessment of Mississippi's forest resources and the broad strategy components required by the 2008 Farm Bill. *An annual report will be developed by MFC each year after following the approval of this document that will also include a detailed annual action plan with specific goals, objectives and strategies for each program area and key issues.*